



DfT INTER CITY EAST COAST FRANCHISE CONSULTATION [June 2012]

RESPONSE FROM  
SENUG

[THE SOUTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND RAIL USER GROUP]

STATUS – Final Response – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2012

## 1. Introduction

a) This is the response from SENUG to the Department For Transport's Inter City East Coast Franchise Consultation, published in June 2012 on the DfT website at <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-24/consultation-icec.pdf> (hereinafter referred to as the DfT consultation document). The DfT requests responses by **18<sup>th</sup> September 2012**. The DfT anticipates publishing the final version of the franchise specification in December 2012 and announcing the successful bidder in August 2013. The successful company will commence operation of the services from December 2013.

b) SENUG is the South East Northumberland Rail User Group which is a voluntary organisation that promotes rail travel and campaigns for better rail services in, within, to and from South East Northumberland, representing the interests of both existing and potential rail travellers in the area. By "potential", SENUG means those who would use rail services if only the trains went where they want to go, at the time they want to go, at a price they can afford, and in a clean, safe, secure and easy to understand manner.

c) The key Inter City station in the area SENUG represents is Morpeth. Passengers in South East Northumberland also take local services to Newcastle to connect with Inter City services. SENUG's comments in response to this consultation will therefore be largely confined to Morpeth, Newcastle and other Northumberland Stations (with the exception of Section 3 which addresses local services and other local stations in the area, and applies if the DfT takes the decision to vertically integrate local services into the ICEC franchise.)

d) Section 2 of this response addresses the specific questions raised in the DfT consultation document and follows the format of the 13 specific questions raised in that document. Section 3 addresses further issues which apply only if the DfT decides to integrate the local service from MetroCentre and Newcastle to Morpeth and Chathill into the Inter City East Coast franchise. If

the DfT decides not to integrate local services, these issues will then apply when the next franchise specification for local services is determined.

e) Section 11.9 of the DfT consultation document requests organisations to state how the views contained in their response have been assembled. SENRUG's aspirations for the ICEC service have been established for some time and are well known by both by our members and the wider community. Additionally, SENRUG lists at Annex 1 the methodology it used to compile this response.

(f) Whilst it is outside the scope of the DfT's consultation, by far the greatest input received by SENRUG concerns the issue of whether the DfT needs to re-franchise this service at all, and the criteria used for evaluating franchise bids. There is a concern that the franchise process does not represent value for money either to the taxpayer or fare paying passenger. There appears to be widespread support for continuing the current arrangement in which the route is operated by East Coast Trains, a government owned company, without a formal re-franchise exercise. Given the commercial failure of the two previous successful bidders for this franchise (GNER and National Express), the potential length of the franchise and the volatile state of the economy there is concern as to whether it is indeed possible to ensure that bidders are capable of delivering their financial and quality commitments over the long term and the effectiveness of any enforcement regime that may be introduced.

## **2. Responses to DfT Questions for the Current Inter City East Coast Service**

### **2.1 Do consultees agree that the proposed franchise objectives are an appropriate expression of the priorities that should apply to the new ICEC franchise?**

The objectives set out by the DfT are reasonable as far as the long distance Inter City service is concerned. If a decision is taken to vertically integrate local services into the ICEC franchise, SENRUG believes there would then need to be additional objectives addressing support of local (including rural) economies and responsiveness to local stakeholders.

### **2.2 Are there any other issues that consultees believe the Department should take into account in determining the length of the new ICEC franchise?**

a) SENRUG believes the DfT should take into account the commercial failure of the two previous franchisees (GNER and National Express) and its own ability to gauge whether a franchisee can meet its commitments over the long term. Given the volatile state of the economy, the longer the period of the franchise, the more difficult it becomes to predict the financial viability of the proposed franchisee and value for money to the tax payer.

b) Other than this concern, the DfT's proposed strategy of having one franchise now, a second one during the construction phase of the new High Speed line and then a third franchise post opening of the High Speed line, at which point the service patterns on the existing (heritage) line are likely to be radically different, appears reasonable.

**2.3 What are consultees' views on the principle of the new ICEC franchise becoming a multi-purpose train operator along the route of the East Coast Main Line rather than focusing only on the Inter City services provided by the current operator?**

a) SENRUG is aware of 4 separate proposals for re-arranging the franchising of local services in South East Northumberland that connect with the ICEC route. These proposals are:

- (i) vertical integration with the Inter City franchise, as suggested in this consultation.
- (ii) maintain the Northern Rail franchise "as is" but transfer management to a consortium of PTEs and local authorities, likely to be dominated by Manchester & Leeds.
- (iii) merge the current Northern Rail and TransPennine Express franchises then re-split on geographic lines (a northern slice and a southern slice)
- (iv) split the current Northern franchise to create smaller, more locally accountable, micro-franchises, eg a Northumbria franchise covering essentially the local routes served by Heaton depot, managed by the Northumberland, Durham and Cumbria local authorities.

b) SENRUG briefly summarises the advantages and disadvantages of each option as well as the existing franchising arrangements, as far as Northumberland passengers are concerned, in the table below:

Option	Possible Advantages	Possible Disadvantages
(i) Vertical integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better focus on local connections for inter-city passengers connecting from smaller stations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operator may remove direct services at smaller stations in favour of connections.</li> <li>• Operator may prioritise profitable inter-city services and not focus on subsidised local services</li> </ul>
(ii) PTE managed franchise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local authorities in Manchester and / or Leeds may dominate the management consortia to the detriment of the needs of Northumberland passengers.</li> </ul>
(iii) Northern & TPE merged then re-split on geographic lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids Newcastle services being isolated from the rest of the franchise area.</li> <li>• May help achieve SENRUG's aspiration of extending Liverpool to Newcastle TPE services on to Cramlington &amp; Morpeth</li> </ul>	
(iv) Micro-franchise for Northumbria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater local accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Franchise may be too small to achieve economies of scale</li> <li>• A single local authority with</li> </ul>

		greater rail resources may dominate the management of the franchise and available resources to the detriment of passengers in other areas.
Existing franchise boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retains boundaries and management structures that stakeholders are already familiar with.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient attention to times of first and last trains, which are currently provided by ICEC franchise</li> <li>Local services from Newcastle are isolated from the rest of the Northern franchise which does not operate services between Newcastle and York.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1 (above):** Possible Advantages and Disadvantages of various franchise models for local services as far as South East Northumberland is concerned.

c) Noting that the advantages and disadvantages between some of the possibilities are finely balanced, rather than express a preference for any particular option, SENRUG prefers to specify the required outcomes; in particular, whatever option is selected by the DfT, there must be clear accountability and responsiveness to local stakeholders, both statutory and community led, and a process for reasonable local aspirations to be considered and evaluated during the life of the franchise. This applies to both ICEC and local services, whether provided by a single or separate franchisees.

d) However, SENRUG is particularly concerned that the DfT believes vertical integration may result in “loss of some current through journey opportunities” (Section 7.4 of the DfT consultation document) and believes that if vertical integration is to take place then there must be a guarantee that current through journey opportunities are maintained. Otherwise vertical integration is not of benefit to passengers at smaller Inter City stations.

e) In the event an option is selected that provides for a franchise to be specified and / or managed by consortia of local authorities rather than the DfT directly, safeguards should be established to protect passenger interests in the areas represented by smaller local authorities or where a local authority has less resources to devote to rail policy. SENRUG is concerned that because Northumberland is a large rural area, much of which is not served by any rail service at all, it may not have the policy focus on rail that smaller or more metropolitan authorities may commit. Yet, residents in those parts of the County that do have access to rail services reasonably expect their interests to be heard and reasonable aspirations to be considered.

## **2.4 Do consultees have any comments on which services might be considered for inclusion in the new ICEC franchise and how they might be specified?**

### **2.4.1 Local Services in Northumberland**

a) Whilst SENRUG does not hold a strong position on vertical integration in general, if a decision is nevertheless taken that vertical integration of local services into the ICEC franchise should

take place, then SENRUG believes the MetroCentre – Newcastle – Morpeth – Chathill route should be included.

b) SENRUG is campaigning to re-open the Ashington Blyth & Tyne freight line to passenger services and believes this could happen during the lifetime of the new ICEC franchise. This would provide a passenger service between Newcastle and Ashington and Woodhorn. SENRUG expects that operation of this route would fall to whatever franchisee is operating the other local services in the area. Thus, if the DfT proceeds with the policy of vertical integration, this service would also come under the ICEC franchise once introduced.

#### **2.4.2 Anglo-Scottish Sleeper Services**

a) SENRUG notes Transport Scotland have decided to separate out the franchising arrangements for the Scottish sleeper services from the daytime (Scotrail) services within Scotland. If this happens SENRUG believes there is a strong case for combining the sleeper services with the subject ICEC franchise, because:

- (i) Both ICEC and the sleeper routes are serving Anglo-Scottish passengers travelling between Aberdeen, Inverness, other Scottish stations and London.
- (ii) With the introduction of “seated sleeper” services, and the general move to a 24 hour economy, there is less discernable difference between day and night time services.
- (iii) Although sleeper services serve both west and east coasts of Scotland, integrating the sleeper services into the ICEC franchise is more logical than the West Coast Main Line franchise, since West Coast Main Line trains do not run north of Glasgow, whereas East Coast Main Line trains run beyond Edinburgh and serve Aberdeen, Inverness as well as Scottish stations en route, and
- (iv) Opportunity could be taken to divert sleeper services onto the East Coast route through England so that they arrive at / depart from the Kings Cross / St Pancras complex facilitating easier connection with the growing range of European services (soon to include Germany).

b) This would result in a single operator running both day and night time services between London, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness. It is envisaged sleeper services would have intermediate stops for seated sleeper passengers at Newcastle and York, thus providing passengers from these stations with a small selection of night-time services between current “last” and “first” trains.

#### **2.5 Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail major development schemes that are likely to have a significant impact on the new ICEC franchise?**

a) As stated at 2.4.1 (b), SENRUG is campaigning for the re-introduction of passenger services on the Ashington Blyth and Tyne line (from Newcastle to Ashington with a possible further branch from Morpeth to Bedlington). If the scheme goes ahead and opens within the life time of the current franchise then this will create an additional catchment area for passengers connecting from the new service to Inter City trains at Newcastle (and possibly at Morpeth). The enhancement of passenger rail services in the area is likely to create additional growth for the whole rail market.

b) The proposed “Blue Sky” leisure and housing development at Stobswood (Widdrington Station) and the commencement of heritage steam train services by the Aln Valley Railway Society at Alnmouth, are likely to create pressure for improved rail services at Widdrington and Alnmouth stations.

**2.6 Are there any research findings, evidence or other publications that consultees wish to bring to the attention of the Department as part of this refranchising process?**

With respect to 2.5 (a), SENRUG wishes to bring to the DfT’s attention the various studies and reports looking at re-introduction of passenger services on the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line. These are the Morpeth - Bedlington Feasibility Study from The Independent Rail Consultancy Group commissioned by the former North East Assembly (March 2007), the Northumberland Park – Ashington Operational Feasibility Study from The Independent Rail Consultancy Group commissioned by Nexus (April 2007), the “Connecting Communities” study from ATOC (June 2009) and the Demand Assessment Report from AECOM commissioned by Northumberland County Council (May 2012).

**2.7 Consultees’ views are invited on the train service specification, including which aspects should be mandated by the Department and which can be left to commercial discretion; and also on whether or not there should be a change in the specified minimum service level when IEP trains are introduced.**

a) For smaller stations such as Morpeth served by the franchise, which do not have the luxury of being served by every train, it is important to mandate how many trains per day should serve the station in question. There is otherwise the risk the operator withdraws key services at regional towns in favour of saving an additional minute on journeys between larger cities, whereas the DfT should additionally be concerned about supporting the economies of mid-sized market towns and the rural areas they serve, which often have significant levels of unemployment.

b) There is also the need to protect the spread of services between peak and off-peak, and throughout the day in general, although this could be managed in conjunction with other Inter City franchises that also serve the station in question. In the case of Morpeth, SENRUG aspires to an Inter City service in each direction at 2-hourly intervals through a combination of ICEC and CrossCountry services.

c) Finally, there is a need to protect the earliest possible arrival in and latest possible departure from London times, particularly in cases such as Morpeth where historically, the first and last trains of the day have been provided by ICEC services so local connections to stations offering better access to / from London are not available.

d) Significant improvements were introduced for all the above criteria for Morpeth at the May 2011 (Eureka) timetable change, yet these are not protected by the current franchise specification. SENRUG therefore requires as a minimum the May 2011 improvements at Morpeth become a requirement for the new franchisee. The new franchise should improve, not worsen, the current level of service at all stations.

e) SENRUG also requests additional particularly off peak services be provided to provide an overall reasonable level of service throughout the day, including services on which cheaper “advance” tickets are likely to be available. SENRUG believes this will increase usage of both existing and the new services (as well as those of other operators). In the case of Morpeth, the statement made at in para 4.6 of the DfT Consultation document, that “there is no significant difference between the peak and off-peak service pattern” does not hold true.

f) The current franchise requirement, the May 2011 service and SENRUG’s aspirations for the new franchise are shown in the tables below (separate tables for northbound and southbound).

<b>NORTHBOUND</b>	<b>Existing Franchise</b>	<b>May 2011 Timetable (Eureka)</b>	<b>Required for New Franchise</b>
<b>Monday to Thursday</b>			
Morning peak (NB: Not from London)	2	2	2
Daytime	0	0	2
Evening (from London)	1	2	2
Total services (overall)	3	4	6
Total services from London	1	2	4
Latest departure from London (direct)	17.30	18.30	18.30
Latest departure from London (change)	17.30	19.00 *	19.00 *
<b>Friday</b>			
Morning peak (NB: Not from London)	2	2	2
Daytime	0	0	2
Evening (from London)	2	3	3
Total services	4	5	7
Total services from London	2	3	5
Latest departure from London (direct)	19.00	19.30	19.30
Latest departure from London (change)	19.00	19.30	19.30
<b>Saturday</b>			
Total services (overall)	3	4	6
Total services from London	1	2	4
Latest departure from London (direct)	18.00	18.00	18.30
Latest departure from London (change)	18.00	18.00	19.00
<b>Sunday</b>			
Total services (overall)	2	4	5
Total services from London	1	3	4
Last departure from London (direct)	13.30	19.00	19.00
Last departure from London (change)	13.30	19.00	19.00

\* The connection from the 19.00 service from Kings Cross on Mondays to Thursdays is provided by the 22.00 Northern Rail service from Newcastle, which is not franchise protected.

**TABLE 2 (previous page):** Northbound Services from Morpeth: Pre May 2011 service, post May-2011 service, and SENRUG’s aspiration for new ICEC franchise.

<b>SOUTHBOUND</b>	<b>Existing Franchise</b>	<b>May 2011 Timetable (Eureka)</b>	<b>Required for New Franchise</b>
<b><i>Monday to Friday</i></b>			
Morning peak	1	2	2
Daytime	0	0	2
Evening	2 *	2 *	2 *
Total services (overall)	3	4	6
Total services to London	1	3	5
Earliest arrival in London (direct)	10.36	10.09	10.10
Earliest arrival in London (change)	10.36	09.36	09.36
<b><i>Saturday</i></b>			
Total services (overall)	2	2	3
Total services to London	1	1	2
Earliest arrival in London (direct)	10.57	11.02	10.30
Earliest arrival in London (change)	10.57	11.02	10.30
<b><i>Sunday</i></b>			
Total services (overall)	2	2	3
Total services to London	2	1	2
Earliest arrival in London (direct)	16.02	15.43	15.00
Earliest arrival in London (change)	16.02	14.45	13.00

*\* Prior to May 2011, neither of the 2 weekday evening southbound services were to London. From May 2011 onwards, 1 of the services is direct to London. This is also the SENRUG requirement for the new franchise.*

**TABLE 3 (above):** Southbound Services from Morpeth: Pre May 2011 service, post May-2011 service, and SENRUG’s aspiration for new ICEC franchise.

**2.8 Consultees’ views are invited on the potential for the franchise to serve locations accessible from the East Coast Main Line which currently have limited or no direct services to London.**

As stated in section 2.7, SENRUG believes the franchisee should be mandated to provide a reasonable direct service to London from Morpeth, in order to help re-invigorate the economy of South East Northumberland. This should include a) protection of the existing timetable introduced in May 2011 under the “Eureka” timetable and b) introduction of a selection of off-peak services on which the cheaper “advance” tickets are more likely to be available.



## **2.9 Are consultees aware of any ways in which improved ticketing, smart ticketing and passenger information might be provided?**

### **2.9.1 Ticketing**

SENRUG would like to see:

- (i) Extension and greater promotion of the “Plusbus” system.
- (ii) Integrated bus / rail tickets. This is particularly important for journeys such as Morpeth – Newcastle where the level of early morning and late evening services is poor. A passenger may wish to take a train from Morpeth to London but only be able to return by train as far as Newcastle and then need to take a bus. This should be possible on a single, integrated ticket.

### **2.9.2 Passenger information.**

a) It should be a mandatory requirement that live train running information should be provided at **all** stations. Currently, Morpeth station does not have this. SENRUG believes it is completely unacceptable that authorities can now provide live bus running information to bus stops, but some rail stations still do not have train running information.

b) Live train running information should also be available for remote stations. Eg Morpeth should not only have live train running information for Morpeth station, it should have it for Newcastle station as well. So for instance, if a local service to Newcastle is running 15 minutes late due to disruption, it is helpful to know whether the required departure from Newcastle is also late (as may well be the case if disruption is affecting all services). Then the passenger can have the confidence their connection will not be missed and may not abandon their journey unnecessarily,

c) Live train running should also be available on board trains, including arrival platforms and departure platforms for connecting services. This would assist passengers needing to make tight connections when an incoming train is late.

### **2.9.3 Passenger information on ticketing in times of disruption.**

SENRUG is aware that in times of extreme disruption operators often advise passengers not to travel and / or relax ticket restrictions allowing passengers to travel on alternate days. However SENRUG believes the system is haphazard and does not give passengers sufficient advice as to their available options. The situation is particularly unclear when a passenger’s ticket involves more than one operator, one of whose services are disrupted but the other’s services are not. SENRUG believes all Inter City operators should be mandated to establish and then abide by an industry wide code of practice that would include the following points:

- (i) If an operator formally posts an advice to intending passengers “not to travel” they are required to offer a full cash (not vouchers) refund for the entire outgoing journey and a return journey (whether the return journey is part of a return ticket or a separate single ticket).

- (ii) In such an instance, there should be clarification as to whether a passenger requests the refund from the operator with the disruption or the company from whom he / she bought the ticket.
- (iii) If an operator formally advises a temporary lifting of ticket restrictions (ie passengers may travel on other than their booked train), other operators involved in a passenger's journey must honour this and also allow the passenger to travel on alternate services of their own to that booked.

**2.10 Do consultees support the use of NPS scores to monitor and improve service quality of the ICEC franchise? Are there any other approaches that might be more effective in securing improvements in customer experience?**

SENUG believes the current NPS scores do not measure the entirety of a passenger's experience, and that performance measures should also be introduced for:

- (i) Availability (ie whether in good working order) of provided station facilities (eg Customer Information Systems, ticket machines, lifts and escalators to platforms).
- (ii) Availability of advertised train facilities (eg the seat reservation system, whether the catering facility is provided as advertised).
- (iii) Noting that the new IEP trains due to be delivered from 2018 are capable of being deployed in either full length or half length mode, SENUG believes a robust penalty facility should be in place for operating a service with a half length train when a full length train is timetabled.
- (iv) Availability, timeliness and accuracy of customer information in the event of unplanned and planned disruptions.
- (v) Speed of settlement of compensation claims (such as the "Delay Repay" scheme) in the event of late train running.

**2.11 What are consultees' priorities for improvements to the stations managed by the ICEC franchisee?**

a) SENUG believes that stations managed by the franchisee should have:

- (i) Staffed presence from first train to last train
- (ii) Staffed ticket purchase and travel information point(s)
- (iii) Level access to all platforms
- (iv) Customer Information Screens and audio announcements
- (v) Passenger toilets (including toilets for meeters and greeters)
- (vi) Food outlets (including sale of hot food) and shops
- (vii) Free cash dispenser machine
- (viii) Taxi rank
- (ix) Adequate interconnection arrangements with bus and other forms of transport.
- (x) Passenger seating – sufficient to cater for number of waiting passengers generated by 1 delayed train (SENUG deplores the removal of the waiting room and the consequent insufficient seating at the recently developed Kings Cross station).

b) Additionally, SENRUG believes the franchisee should be obliged to work with other Station Facility Operators including where necessary contributing to funding, to ensure all stations served by its trains have the following minimum set of facilities:

- (i) Staffed presence from first train to last train **OR** working Help Point allowing connection to a remote operator at any time.
- (ii) Staffed ticket purchase and travel information points **OR** ability to collect or otherwise use pre-ordered tickets at any time, through a facility such as a Ticket Machine, or alternative more advanced technology as introduced.
- (iii) Level access to all platforms
- (iv) Customer Information Screens and audio announcements
- (v) Passenger toilets (including toilets for meeters and greeters)

c) SENRUG notes with concern Morpeth station, now served by 13 Inter City services per day, still has no Customer Information System or audio announcement capability, and thus no way of obtaining train running information once the Ticket Office is closed. It also has no toilet or indoor waiting facility during the afternoons and on Sunday, when the Ticket Office is closed. It is primarily Inter City passengers who particularly need these facilities. Franchise specifications therefore need to require train operators to work together to ensure these facilities are both provided and kept in working order.

d) SENRUG believes the DfT should set the minimum facilities for each class of station and have an arbitration scheme if train operators serving a particular station can not agree funding contributions to provide the minimum required facilities between themselves. Adherence to such a scheme should be a requirement of all future franchises.

## **2.12 What do consultees believe are the most important factors in improving safety and security (actual or perceived)?**

SENRUG believes these are as follows:

- (i) Staffed presence both at stations and on trains (and in the case of staff on trains, where to find the staff).
- (ii) Modern, up to date rolling-stock with in-built safety features
- (iii) Greater attention to passenger comfort and wellbeing particularly in stranded train scenarios (SENRUG believes operators currently tend to prioritise train rescue above passenger rescue and passenger wellbeing).

## **2.13 Are there any increments or decrements to the DfT's proposed specification that stakeholders would wish to see and would be prepared to fund?**

As SENRUG is not a statutory organisation with powers to fund services, it is inappropriate for us to answer this question. However, if local services are included within the franchise then there are incremental services SENRUG hopes an appropriate authority would fund. These are detailed in Section 3.

### **3. Issues For Local Services in South East Northumberland**

SENUG sets out below its requirements for the local services in South East Northumberland which are relevant should the provision of local services be vertically integrated with the ICEC franchise.

#### **3.1 Stations**

All stations served by local rail services only should have:

- (i) Customer Information Systems (currently not available at any station on the Newcastle to Chathill route though SENUG understands it is planned for Morpeth).
- (ii) Help Point or other ability to talk to a rail operator if the station is unstaffed (not currently available at any station along the route)
- (iii) Level access to all platforms (now being installed at Morpeth, not yet available at Manors, but already available at all other stations).

NB: Minimum facilities for rail stations served by local services **and** Inter City services are given at 2.11 (a) and 2.11 (b).

#### **3.2 Train Services**

SENUG wishes to see the following improvements to local train services:

- (i) The existing hourly service between Newcastle and Morpeth via Cramlington to be increased to every 30 minutes, with evening, earlier morning and Sunday trains added. (This could be achieved by the extension of the current TransPennine Express service from Liverpool to Newcastle on to Cramlington and Morpeth, instead of TPE trains waiting for 45 minutes at Newcastle before commencing their return journeys).
- (ii) The current one train a day service north of Morpeth to Chathill should be increased to provide a throughout the day service at least every 2 hourly. The service should be further extended to Berwick, with the former Beal and Belford stations re-opened, and should operate on Sundays. This would enhance the tourism potential of Northumberland by opening up the north of the County to leisure passengers, as well as improving services for commuters and other travellers in these communities.
- (iii) There is a particular need to increase the provision of peak hour services at Cramlington, Pegswood and Widdrington, and to provide an hourly service throughout the evening up till midnight for Cramlington and Morpeth.

#### **3.3 Ashington Blyth & Tyne Line**

a) SENUG's campaign to see passenger services restored on the existing fully maintained freight only Ashington Blyth and Tyne line has already been mentioned at Sections 2.4.1 (b), 2.5 (a) and 2.6. SENUG expects the operator of the local rail service to work constructively with SENUG, Northumberland County Council, Network Rail and other identified stakeholders to progress the necessary work to achieve this objective.

b) The initial service identified in the Demand Appraisal study commissioned by Northumberland County Council calls for an hourly service from Newcastle to Ashington and Woodhorn, increased to every 30 minutes in morning and evening peaks. The service would have intermediate stops at Northumberland Park (Metro interchange), Seaton Delaval, Newsham for Blyth, Bebside and Bedlington. SENRUG believes there is additionally a case for a station at Seghill.

c) SENRUG additionally wants to see alternate Newcastle to Morpeth services (ie those that are **not** extended north to Chathill or Berwick as per 3.2 (ii) extended on the existing freight route to Choppington and Bedlington, connecting with services on the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line at Bedlington, and providing a train service every 2 hours each way at Choppington.

d) SENRUG believes there is potential for further extensions to passenger services on the Ashington Blyth & Tyne line once the core route is re-opened including (a) Newsham to Blyth, (b) Woodhorn to Newbiggin and (c) Ashington to Widdrington via Butterwell. Possibilities (a) and (b) would require short sections of new track to be re-laid whereas (c) would utilise an existing privately owned freight line but would require creation of a new junction at Butterwell. However, SENRUG accepts the requisite feasibility and demand assessment work has not yet been done so at this stage these proposals remain aspirational.

### **3.4 Rolling Stock**

The current rolling stock used on local rail services in Northumberland is nearing the end of its useful life and is both noisy and uncomfortable for passengers. SENRUG believes a commitment should be made to provide new rolling stock in conjunction with the next franchise for local services.

**End**

Annex 1 follows

## **Annex 1**

### **Methodolgy Used to Compile SENRUG Response**

#### **This information is provided in response to Section 11.9 of the DfT consultation document**

- (i) *25<sup>th</sup> July 2012*: Email to all SENRUG members (who have provided an email address), giving the link to the DfT consultation document. This email set out the basis on which SENRUG's response would be formulated, and asked members with additional comments or who wished differing views to be considered to email the response author.
- (ii) *10<sup>th</sup> August 2012*: First draft of full response submitted to all SENRUG committee members for comment.
- (iii) *11<sup>th</sup> August 2012*: August 2012: Notice posted on SENRUG website, giving the link to the DfT consultation document and advising SENRUG would provide a response. Interested parties were invited to submit views to SENRUG's mailbox, stating (i) whether they are a SENRUG member, (ii) where they live and (iii) how often they use East Coast services.
- (iv) *25<sup>th</sup> August 2012*: Second draft of full response reflecting inputs from the above consultation submitted to all SENRUG committee members for comment.
- (v) *7<sup>th</sup> September 2012*: Final version of SENRUG response created reflecting input from steps (iii) and (iv), sent to DfT with copies to Passenger Focus, Northumberland County Council, Morpeth Town Council and Ian Lavery MP (Wansbeck) as requested by Sections 11.7 and 11.8 of the DfT consultation document.

#### **End of Annex 1**